

July 25, 2014

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner and Minority Leader Pelosi:

On behalf of the National Association of Counties (NACo), I respectfully urge your support of H.R. 4315, the “*Endangered Species Transparency and Reasonableness Act*” when it is considered by the House of Representatives.

NACo has long recognized the importance of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) as an essential safeguard for America’s fish, wildlife and plants and therefore supports updating and improving it to better achieve its goals.

Counties are responsible for building and maintaining safe, healthy, vibrant and economically resilient communities. They are stewards of the local environment and are integral components of our nation’s intergovernmental system. Because the ESA can have such significant impact on local communities, the federal agencies responsible for enforcing it should consult and collaborate more closely with states and counties throughout all its processes and phases. Steps should be taken to ensure that the scientific evidence used to inform agency decision-making is more transparent and takes local data into consideration. Further, reforms should be made to limit the way ESA litigation is used to preempt and circumvent local authorities.

Accordingly, NACo respectfully urges you to support H.R. 4315 as an important step towards addressing these concerns and improving the credibility and effectiveness of the ESA. This important legislation makes a number of important improvements to the Act:

- The bill requires publication on the Internet of the basis for determinations that species are endangered species or threatened species;
- The bill requires an annual report on expenditures for certain ESA-related law suits. A searchable database of the information must also be made publically on the Internet;
- The bill requires disclosure to states of the basis of determinations under such Act, to ensure use of information provided by state, tribal, and county governments in decision making; and
- The bill amends the ESA to conform citizen suits under that Act with the Equal Access to Justice Act.

Thank you for considering the views of America’s counties as you cast your vote on H.R. 4315.

Sincerely,



Matthew D. Chase
Executive Director